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Book Review: Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*, London, Routledge, 2007

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The late nineteenth century saw the domestic interior become more private and a place for the expression of individuality and personality of the occupant. Edmund de Goncourt among others described the home as a refuge filled with pretty inanimate objects to refresh and renew the inhabitant. The precision and placing of artefacts was designed to arouse the sensations in the tradition of earlier publications such as Jean-Francois de Bastide's *The Little House* and Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières' *The Genius of Architecture*. Handbooks on home decorating such as Jacob von Falke's *Art in the Home*, Mary Haweis' *Art of Decoration*, and other publications recognised the home as an artistic collection, and offered advice alongside histories of furniture, rooms and decorations. Such publications designed to educate the reader also sat with more 'professional' volumes such as *Suggestions for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork, and Furniture* by Rhoda and Agnes Garrett. By inverting gender identities in their text the Garretts cleverly subvert the domestic ideology of Charles Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste*; a political action signalling their allegiances to suffrage and the franchise movement. It is in the spirit of this 'history' of the interior as a decorated, lined inside to architecture, and the contested territory of occupants, upholsterers and architects that this volume is important.

In the *Emergence of the Interior* Charles Rice investigates the interior through 'doubleness' a semantic development the appearance of which he traces through the late nineteenth century. This doubling is carefully articulated through various examples, which essentially realises the interior as both an image and a spatial configuration.

Organised into two parts Rice covers several key relationships between architecture and the interior not only within its own discipline but in a wider cultural and geographic context. That is he attempts to expose how the doubled interior as a physical and psychical entity can be examined through particular modes of philosophical and psychological enquiry, and contextualise this relative to architecture, modernity and domesticity. For such a slim volume this is an ambitious project.

The first part 'orientations' provides a short critical account of traditional histories of the interior traced through several key texts including Mario Praz, Charlotte Gere and Peter Thornton. Rice examines their reliance on continuity of visual images as evidence of inhabitation and questions this approach against shifts in representational techniques and interpretations of paintings. He concludes that the interior as a concept and space of inhabitation is produced both in spatial practice and representation, to be understood as 'doubling.' Evidence is presented through a detailed discussion of Walter Benjamin's account of the bourgeois interior and the psychoanalytic space of Sigmund Freud's consulting rooms. The former is particularly interesting linking subjectivity of the collector as resident to the changing nature of collections. Here Rice demonstrates a deep understanding of Benjamin's texts that steps away from their reading as spatial strategies to reveal a more allegorical reading of surface, space and occupation. The latter presents Freud's interior, a "spatialization of Freud's own psychological interiority," as an active participating agent in the process of analysis.

Part two 'trajectories' takes a different slant and one the author is careful to note is not dependent on part one, but each is a different framing for considering the emergence of the interior. Three case studies include texts more usually associated with architecture than the designed interior. Rice uses texts by Robert Kerr (*The Gentleman's House*) and J J Stevenson (*House Architecture*) to discuss another reading of the plan that includes an "imaginative inhabitation" free from material constraints. What is imagined is comfort. Kerr approaches the plan as both subjective state for experiencing an interior as well as a material

attribute, leading to a doubled condition of materially coded plan and device for immaterial inhabitation. Comfort is achieved by separation enabling repose. Stevenson on the other hand sought comfort through interaction in which the ideal plan is revised to account for the lived domestic condition that includes loosening servant served separation. One interesting aspect of this chapter is the way analysis includes architect's written text alongside plans.

A second 'comparison' is a geohistorical analysis of the exportation of English interiors to Germany via Hermann Muthesius, and Australia via the Robert and Joanna Barr Smith. The fact that each figure has a radically different relationship to architecture appears to be critical to this section. Differing geographical perspectives question Modernism's exportation through traditional histories, although as Rice acknowledges, each had a radically different agenda.

A discussion of photographic images of Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier interiors are the subject of the final comparison. Though this might seem like well worn material, Rice works through Beatriz Colomina's writing to demonstrate another reading of Loos' manipulated images, suggesting that he recognised the interior as both spatial condition and image.

Overall I enjoyed the book particularly the way Rice deals with the emergence of the interior as a doubled condition, and uses examples to piece together the breadth of its existence through modernism. Noting that the subject is to some extent elusive, the power of the methodology is to unpack the certainties of a simple continuous history and show how a shift in meaning effects conceptualisations of the interior.

However the book's organisation into two parts and virtually discrete chapters does suggest a discontinuity in the argument for what is after all a very short book. For example Benjamin's reflective account of the nineteenth-century interior operates well with the three 'lived' case studies in the second section, where slightly different aspects of 'doubling' are revealed. But the author has not fully outlined why these particular examples are included, nor is their 'chronological' order explained. Moreover the text occasionally reads like 'proof' in that the reader is asked to "see chapter..." in order to progress understanding. Whilst this is perhaps personal disquiet with the structure and organisation, other aspects did bother me. Rice chooses to exclude gender questions, an unusual omission when dealing with the interior, particularly when all examples are from male perspectives conforming to the masculine modern. There is no attempt to discuss for example the housewife-as-artist in which decorating is also conducted in a modernist spirit, but without the 'training.' Nor is there any discussion of the conceptual conflation of women and the domestic interior where women and interiors were seen alike. Such interchangeability is also found in the Goncourts who as Debora Silverman in her *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siecle France* notes, "clarified how the rococo interior was inseparable from its female identity".

This aside the strength of this book is the author's ability to take on new territory, and establish a discussion of the interior that should help rethink the teaching of interior history and theory. That is by moving beyond the visual, Rice exposes how 'doubling' offers another technique for understanding interior design history and theory that is outside the prevailing paradigm. As a contribution to recent publications on the interior, this book will do much to advance scholarship on the designed interior.